

Testimony to the Connecticut General Assembly's Judiciary Committee
In Support of Senate Bill 1019
March 10, 2021

To the Honorable Senator Winfield and the Honorable Representative Stafstrom, Co-Chairs; and the distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary:

I am writing **in support of Senate Bill No. 1019: An Act Concerning The Board Of Pardons And Paroles, Erasure Of Criminal Records For Certain Misdemeanor And Felony Offenses, Prohibiting Discrimination Based On Erased Criminal History Record Information And Concerning the Recommendations of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission with Respect to Misdemeanor Sentences.**

My name is Tracy Johnson Russell, I am a resident of Bethany, Connecticut and I am an Episcopal priest, serving St. Monica's Episcopal Church in Hartford. My congregation believes that God is a God of grace; who's unrelenting, patient, bold, and loving presence, offers mercy to all of God's people, the lost, the lonely, and the least. A God who repeatedly offers vulnerable people living on the margins of the society a clean slate, a fresh start, a second, tenth, or one-hundredth chance, to realize a new beginning.

I believe that forgiveness and receiving a "clean slate" in life, a life that for many has its share of difficulty and challenge, is the central healing act and holy sign accomplished over and over again by Jesus as he models the way of love, justice, and reconciliation. We who been forgiven an infinite number of times by our loving God must extend that same forgiveness to our neighbors.

In the state of Connecticut, mass incarceration has had a devastating and ongoing effect on the Black and Brown communities...burdening thousands of Connecticut residents a criminal record that has lasting ramifications for obtaining sustaining opportunities of employment, housing, and higher education.

I believe that SB 1019 will allow the state of Connecticut to strengthen our communities and the economy, improve public safety, and advance the call for racial justice, and move us towards greater racial equity in the criminal justice system. I encourage all members of the Judiciary Committee, in a non-partisan way, to support this important measure for the flourishing of us all.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



The Reverend Tracy Johnson Russell
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